

**Remarks made by
The Honorable William S. Cohen
Secretary of Defense of the United States**

General and Carolyn Shelton, General and Gert Clark, General and Dede Ralston, Admiral and Marjorie Abbot, General and Diane Jones, General Robertson, leaders and men and women of U.S. European Command, distinguished guests including State Parliament President Straub, Minister Schauble and all of our of our German allies and friends, Janet, ladies and gentlemen. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to join you on this day of celebration and transition.

I should confess to you upfront that during the briefing by Sergeant Major Young I indicated it looked as if the ceremony were going to last at least 2 hours. And he said that Sir depends on how long the speeches are. With that let me try to be as brief as possible.

I'd like to begin by sharing the following passage. Mankind has progressed in enlightenment and in humanity to a point where the old might peacefully be preserved and absorbed into the new. There is hope for perpetual peace and progress. Modern ideas are triumphing everywhere. There is no doubt that a new world is being made.

These sentiments might well describe the dawn of a 21st Century. In fact it was how one scholar described the dawn of the 20th, a century in which two world wars reminded us that the future that we want will come only to us when we embrace the cause of peace and progress and freedom.

One month from now America and our allies will pause to remember the defining moment in that enduring cause. The dedication of the National D-day Museum in New Orleans will recall that day when young soldier plunged into the crashing surf at Normandy and braved a hail of hot steel to free this continent. Leaders and men and women of European Command, you are the heirs of those who braved those beaches. For half a century since, through a bitter cold war you stood strong. For the half century since from the Berlin Airlift to the Bosnian Airlift, you risked all to preserve freedom and to bring us blessings to others. Well to help preserve that freedom at the end of the century, America turned to the leader that we honor today.

In General Wes Clark, America found a scholar, soldier and a statesman. A scholar who understands the forces of history on our time. A soldier of unquestioned courage, a bronze and silver star hero who despite grievous wounds inspired his unit to survive in the jungles of Vietnam. And of insight who returned to train those who prevailed in Desert Storm. He's a statesman who's influence has been felt from the Americas where he felt to guide the fight against drug barons to Dayton where his counsel helped end the blood letting in Bosnia.

Now it's been said that without passion man is a mere latent force and possibility like the flint, which awaits the shock of the iron before it can give forth his spark. Future historians will recount how the passion of leadership of Wes Clark and the dedicated men and women of this command combine to spark new possibilities across this continent forging new bonds in a great Partnership for

Peace and serving along side soldiers from some 38 nations to bring peace to Bosnia and Kosovo.

And I would add that the service of General Clark in Bosnia has actually come full circled. He was there on that muddy mountain road five summers ago when three of Americas best gave their lives trying to end that war. And he's been there so many times since turning the plan that he helped to craft at Dayton into what we hope will be a durable peace.

Now General Shelton has reminded us of the historic accomplishments further to the south. And indeed while it may be tempting to view darkly the challenges of the moment in Kosovo, I would say to all who are here today no one, no one should ever doubt either your service or your success. Faced with an adversary, who manufactured a vicious humanitarian nightmare, you responded with compassion and speed to relieve human suffering. Faced with an adversary, who tried to maximize civilian death and misery, you responded by minimizing the suffering of the innocent.

It was just a year ago today the Serbian forces were on a rampage and nearly a million Kosovar Albanians had fled threatening to overwhelm their neighbors. But you responded and today Milosevic's thugs are out of Kosovo and the vast majority of refugees have returned. Neighboring nations are joining in the effort to rebuild that ravaged land.

So General Clark, men and women of EUCOM, thank you again for your outstanding leadership and for reminding us that behind the greatest alliance in history stands the finest military in history. And its for this and other reasons that

I'm recommending the creation of the Kosovo Campaign Medal and I hope that it will be awarded to all who participated in that great effort.

And of course as we just heard a moment ago, behind the military leader of whom we pay tribute today stands a pillar of strength in her own right. Girt through some 33 years of marriage, I think almost as many moves; you too have served this country with great distinction. Raising your voice on behalf of our forces and their families, Girt thank you for your service to America and to this alliance.

Now the same wore your strength, the same diplomatic skill that we see in General Wes Clark, we also see in General Joe Ralston. As Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, he helped guide America's forces in the sunset of the 20th Century and as Commander in Chief European Command and Supreme Allied Commander, he's going to guide America's forces on this continent in the dawn of the 21st.

So Joe and Dede we congratulate you, we welcome you both to this great command.

Several months after Operation Allied Force, I attended a celebration of that mission and the men and women behind it at Andrews Air Force base in Maryland. And I recall the words of the Civil War hero Joshua Chamberlain when he returned to Gettysburg. Chamberlain said a great and free country is not merely defense and protection, for every earnest spirit it is opportunity and inspiration. The inspiration of noble cause involving human interests wide and far enable men to do things they did not dream possible they were capable of doing.

This consciousness of belonging greatens the heart to the limits of the souls ideal and it builds out the supreme of character.

General Clark, thank you for your service in a most noble cause, thank you for your courage and your character and your commitment which has greatened the hearts of American people and the people of Europe. We are truly indebted to you and forever indebted.